Senate Unit Limits Inquiry to 6 Covert C.I.A. Actions

By NICHOLAS M. HORROCK
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 14—The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence will limit its investigation of covert activities by the Central Intelligence Agency to a "half-dozen or so representative cases," including the intervention in Chile, the committee chairman said today.

Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, said that his committee had neither the time nor the resources for an exhaustive review of all the covert operations conducted by the C.I.A. in the last three decades. He said, therefore, that the committee would select six operations for its attention.

The move appeared to be the first major limiting of the committee's targets in its inquiry into the United States intelligence community. Mr. Church has complained on several occasions that delays in receiving evidence from the executive agencies involved and the White House have slowed the pace of the investigations.

Colby Briefs Panel

Mr. Church said that the committee received a briefing today from William E. Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, on the agency's Chile operations as the committee had agreed to accept briefings on each area of its interest from officials of the executiv branch as a courtesy to the White House. Mr. Colby wil continue the briefing tomorrow, he said.

He said that the committee planned o ask Mr. Colby about the death in October, 1970, of Gen. René Schneider, commander in chief of the Chilean Army, who was killed shortly before the election of President Salvador Allende Gossens of Chile was confirmed. Chilean press accounts said that the genera's death had been aimed at creating a military coup in the Latin-American country.

Public Hearings Delayed

Press reports have suggested that the C.I.A. may have had some in-volvement in Genera Schneider's death. The genera was killed during an apparent kidnapping attempt when he allegedly reached for a gun to protect himself, according to these reports.

The difficulties for the committee in investigating tre vas $6-billion a-year intelligence community have become increasingly apparent in recent weeks.

In addition to the vastness and complexity of the subject matter, Mr. Church has publicly reported difficulties in interviewing witnesses and obtaining Government documents on several occasions.

This problem and the question of C.I.A. involvement in foreign political assassinations have delayed committee plans to hold public hearings. They are now tentativelye scheduled for early fall.

Mr. Church said today that he still hored to meet an Aug. 1 deadline for making public a report on the assassination matter. He had earlier ruled out public hearings on the question.

The Senate is scheduled to go into recess during the first week of August and Mr. Church said that if the assassination inquiry was not completed, he would recommend that the committee meet through the recess.